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A STUDY TO DISCOVER THE  
UNIFYING FORCE OR PRINCIPLE  
IN THE WRITING OF  
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

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A Thesis  
Presented to the Faculty of  
The Episcopal Theological School

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Bachelor of Divinity

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By  
Bruce Alan Gray  
April 13, 1966

To K-Ann and Susan  
Who Have Provided  
Unity and Wholeness in My Life

### Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is given to Dr. Owen Thomas for his help and suggestions in the writing of this thesis; to Mr. Richard Crosby, General Manager for New England of A. B. Dick and Co. who made possible the copies of the thesis; and above all to my wife whose typing and preparation of the manuscript was truly a labor of love.

The works of Coleridge listed by individual titles.

Volume I.	<u>Aids to Reflection</u> <u>The Statesman's Manual</u>
Volume II.	<u>The Friend</u>
Volume III.	<u>Biographia Literaria</u>
Volume IV.	<u>Notes and Lectures on Shakespeare</u>
Volume V.	<u>Literary Remains</u> <u>Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit</u>
Volume VI.	<u>On the Constitution of Church and State</u> <u>A Lay Sermon</u> <u>Table Talk</u>
Volume VII.	<u>Poetical and Dramatic Works</u>

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Poet, philosopher and theologian are all titles that have been applied to Samuel Taylor Coleridge. There is little doubt today that he deserves each title in its truest and most specific sense. Even though it may sound contradictory, Coleridge pursued these three basic professions both separately and all at once. It appears that at times Coleridge, the theologian, took priority over all else. At other times, the poet in him asserted itself. At all times, however, we discern within the man himself a basic unity of thought, and a unity in the pursuit of life and knowledge that brings together all three pursuits. That is not to say, that Coleridge ever constructed any kind of system that comprehends all else. It means rather that throughout a great variety of written works can be seen and felt a man striving to comprehend life as an organic whole and not just as an assemblage of parts. This thesis then will be an attempt to discover and define the unifying force or forces in the work of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

What kind of unity are we looking for in Samuel Taylor Coleridge? It is not too difficult to discover and document an artistic or literary unity in the poetical writings of Coleridge. His poetic genius is unquestioned by any serious critic today. Even though his poems cover a range of topics, each one is a beautifully unified work.

If, however, the basis for unity in all of Coleridge's efforts was to lie solely in his poetic accomplishments, then this unity would be non-existent before the man ever reached the prime of his life; for Coleridge completed all of his greatest poetry by the age of twenty-five ("The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" was completed in March of 1798.) Further, it should be noted that in seven volumes of published works<sup>1</sup> only one volume is necessary to contain the poetic and other dramatic writings. Therefore, it would seem that the basis for any kind of unity in all of Coleridge's thought must lie outside that of his artistic expression alone. I do believe that one of the keys to the thought of Coleridge lies in the very question as to why he did, for all intents and purposes, cease to write great poetry at an early age. To this question, we shall return.

If we are to deal with Coleridge in terms of unity, then we need to find a definition that is both flexible and allows for variety. Webster is helpful here. Unity in variety is defined as, "a principle that aesthetic value or beauty in art depends on the fusion of various elements into an organic whole which produces a single impression." <sup>2</sup> With a few minor changes, this definition can be a helpful guideline to what Coleridge as a thinker, was trying to



accomplish. I would propose the following definition of unity: the fusion of various elements into an organic whole which produces a single impression. This definition allows us to go beyond the limitations of art in order to account for the whole experience of life.

The purpose of this thesis will be to discover what are the various diverse elements that Coleridge has used to create his unity of thought. Put another way, my hope is to uncover whatever unifying principles can be found in the writing of a man who at age twenty-five could write a great epic poem and twenty-seven years later write a complex philosophical and theological work, Aids to Reflection. Throughout his entire life, Coleridge carried on the fusion process of all the elements of experience as he saw them and encountered them.

To me, this seems to be a valuable study at this time for a number of reasons. Coleridge is acknowledged as a great thinker and worthwhile dealing with at any time. Also, and possibly even more important for our time, is the fact that Coleridge was a man who was willing and able to wrestle with the complexities of his time. He was not satisfied to accept answers previously accepted. He needed to search out and discover the

basis of life for himself. He wanted to find out what was the unifying force of life. Our life today is complex. We find it becoming more and more departmentalized. Christians and non-Christians alike are trying to find some unifying force for their personal and social lives in the second half of the twentieth century. It is my hope that by looking at the thought of Coleridge in terms of unity, we may be led to ways of finding some answers to the complexities of our own age.

My original intention for this paper was to deal in only a very cursory manner with the poetry of Coleridge and then place the primary emphasis on the later and more mature thought as reflected in Aids to Reflection. However, in preparing the paper, I discovered that separating the poetry and the prose work was nearly impossible. Neither can be fully understood and appreciated without the other. Therefore, my attempt in this thesis will be to discover and define the essential unity that Coleridge believed existed between revelation and reason.

In order to do this, it is necessary to have an understanding of the historical situation in which Coleridge lived and worked and also to have a basic grasp of the major influences on his life.

My intention in writing a biographical section at all is only to present the major influences on Coleridge's life. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born at his father's vicarage of Ottery St. Mary, Devonshire, on October 21, 1772. His life spanned the change from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, a period which has been described as one of transition and change. A new age was dawning, one which Coleridge would react to with all the force of his creative and insightful mind. Further, he was to be a leader in the transition process. "Coleridge ... may be regarded as the leading English representative of the European reaction against the eighteenth century; in him the nineteenth century awakens to all that was undreamed of in the philosophy of its predecessor." 3

This period of change and transition was not limited in any sense, but rather, embraced all fields of intellectual pursuits. "It was not only among economists, political theorists [or] men of public affairs, ... that a new spirit moved in the years after 1790. Everywhere the firm horizons were dissolving, the classical stability was giving way to 'inexhaustible discontent, languor, and homesickness,' ... but to experiment also, to confident reconstruction, or even to the feverish pursuit of novelty for its own sake." 4

The French Revolution was probably the first major impetus for change. Even when disillusionment followed this event, the early spirit it had awakened continued. The old ways of thinking and acting were no longer accepted at face value, but were criticized and rejected. Creation and creativity became key words for the new age. This spirit manifested itself most forceably in the Romantic Movement. "Romanticism is at bottom a mood of discontent with the accepted rules of expression, a feeling that the expression of human nature has been cribbed and confined by dead laws. This discontent issues in an excited attempt to discover fresh means by which the artist may explain himself to others, means more appropriate to new experiences. It is therefore, a search for new values. Rejecting authorities the Romantic will refuse to respect anything but his own heart."<sup>5</sup>

Coleridge, while he certainly was a leader in the Romantic school, also realized that the mind and reason needed to be joined with the heart and feeling if the new creative spirit was to be true to its call and relevant to its time. In a letter to Thomas Poole in 1801, he says, "My opinion is thus: that deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep feeling, and that all truth is a species of revelation."<sup>6</sup> The new creative spirit demanded the union of heart and mind, whereas, the seventeenth

century had subordinated the heart to the mind. Coleridge had the quickness and ability of mind to hear and transcribe the feelings and observations of his heart.

Change and a new spirit were also to be discovered in the pursuit of philosophy. For Coleridge and others, the new thinking in philosophy was not to be divorced from the whole Romantic movement. Writing of the Idealism of the 1870's J. H. Muirhead says, "We shall wholly misunderstand the meaning and significance of the Idealism of the 'seventies if we fail to take it in connexion with the whole Romantic movement of which it seemed to be at once the justification and completion." <sup>7</sup> Of Coleridge's place in this movement he says, "I do not think that there is a point in the Idealism of the 'seventies which was not anticipated, perhaps even better expressed than it has ever been since, by Coleridge in one place or another of his multifarious writings.... It was a profound discontent with the popular philosophy of his own country that had driven Coleridge further afield to find a metaphysic that could explain and justify the work of the poetic imagination." <sup>8</sup>

Coleridge was never to provide a new system of philosophy. No school has ever developed from his writings. Yet he offered the signposts to a new age. No longer could unfeeling reason alone be used to guide man in his search

for truth. For the heart and the mind are both a part of man and must not be separated if man is to remain whole and if he is to discover the totality of life and truth.

Throughout his life, Coleridge was motivated by the religious experiences which he encountered in life. Some of the awareness which he had for religion can be seen in his early family relationships in a vicarage family. Most of what is known of Coleridge's early life comes from five letters he wrote to Thomas Poole beginning in 1797. Like much that Coleridge did, his promise to give a full narrative of his life to that time was never completed.<sup>9</sup> Coleridge describes his father as a "perfect Parson Adams." He says, "The truth is, my father was not a first-rate genius; he was, however, a first-rate Christian, which is much better.... In learning, good-heartedness, absentness of mind, and excessive ignorance of the world, he was a perfect Parson Adams."<sup>10</sup> Coleridge relates that he was the tenth and youngest son of his father's second wife. He had nine older brothers and one sister, plus three step-sisters by his father's first wife who had died in 1751.

The third letter dated October 9, 1797 is very revealing of the kind of childhood experienced by Coleridge. It presents a picture of a lonely boy, who used the means of books and his vivid imagination to relieve this loneliness.

By the age of six, Coleridge had read Robinson Crusoe and Philip Quarles, which is an indication of the rapid development of his mind. Coleridge sums up the years from 1775 with these words,

So I became a dreamer, and acquired an indisposition to all bodily activity; and I was fretful, and inordinately passionate; and as I could not play at anything and was slothful, I was despised and hated by the boys; and because I could read and spell, and had, I may truly say, a memory and understanding forced into almost unnatural ripeness, I was flattered and wondered at by all the old women. And so I became very vain, and despised most of the boys that were at all near my own age, and before I was eight years old I was a character. Sensibility, imagination, vanity, sloth and feelings of deep and bitter contempt for almost all who traversed the orbit of my understanding, were even then prominent and manifest. ll

If Coleridge's memory is accurate in this description, then we can see an early development of the character traits that were to accompany him all his life. Coleridge was often accused of being slothful even as he points out in this excerpt. This term to describe Coleridge should be used with caution, however. To be sure, Coleridge was guilty of putting things off whenever he could, and often he did not finish what he started. But he did leave us a large amount of written material, so that in terms of quantity alone he cannot necessarily be called slothful. Whether he fulfilled his capabilities in either quantity

or quality is still a question open to debate.

Coleridge in a later note says, "I was driven from life in motion to life in thought and sensation.... I never thought as a child, never had the language of a child." <sup>12</sup> Possibly if he had had a more balanced childhood, Coleridge might have avoided some of the problems which plagued him in later life.

Following the death of his father in 1781, Coleridge went to London, and from there entered Christ's Hospital school. He remained at Christ's Hospital for eight years. In February 1791, he entered Jesus College, Cambridge. His friend, Middleton had preceded him to Cambridge and for the first year or two provided a mature and calming influence. But Middleton left the University in 1792, "...and there seems to have been no one to take his place as a steadying influence." <sup>13</sup> Coleridge needed a steadying influence.

At about this time, Coleridge came under the unitarian influence of William Frend, who was a fellow at Jesus College. Only in his later life was Coleridge to proclaim his faith and belief in Anglican orthodoxy especially in terms of the Trinity. His acquaintance with Frend and his acceptance of Unitarianism ended forever any plans once held by his father that Coleridge would enter the clergy. Also during his stay at Cambridge, "the germs of neo-



platonic philosophy, of revolutionary opinions, and of romantic composition which had struck root in the orphan school now shot freely upwards, under the happier auspices of his present life." <sup>14</sup> The works of David Hartley and Berkeley also were scrutinized by Coleridge. Professor Brandl acknowledges the incongruity of Coleridge's admiration for both these men. "How he managed to be equally enthusiastic for Hartley--who acknowledged no matter--and for Berkeley--the ultra-materialist, who treated perception and memory as the purely physical results of nervous vibration and action,--is one of those enigmas with which Coleridge's early life abounds. But to bring extremes into actual contact was the aim of the Romantic School." <sup>15</sup> However, neither one of these philosophers was destined to provide the real basis and center for Coleridge's own philosophy.

It is interesting to note here the early poetic influence of the sonnets of Mr. Bowles on Coleridge. Bowles published the second edition of his sonnets in 1789 and these seem to have affected Coleridge greatly, even though it is difficult to define or explain the influence. <sup>16</sup> Bowles was not an especially good poet, and seems to have had no lasting influence on Coleridge's style or thinking. In fact, Coleridge himself admits this in a letter to Southey, "The truth is Bowles has indeed

the sensibility of a poet, but he has not the passion of a great poet. His latter writings all want native passion." 17

In 1793, he left Cambridge probably due to a general discontent with university life, and also, probably pressed by debts. It should be noted here that there is a possibility that Coleridge's unfulfilled love for Mary Evans caused him to be distracted enough to leave the University. Coleridge first met the Evans' family when he was about sixteen (1788). Campbell reports that his relationship with this family was "...a connection destined to exercise an important influence on his career." 18

It would seem that Coleridge looked upon Mrs. Evans as a mother or aunt and the daughters as sisters or cousins. However, in a letter dated October 21, 1794, Coleridge wrote to Mary Evans to tell her that for four years he had tried to "smother a very ardent attachment." It appears that Coleridge heard Mary had become engaged and decided to find out if the rumor was true. Mary had always looked upon Coleridge as a younger brother but his letter must have convinced her that he was no longer just a boy and deserved a worthy response. J. D. Campbell remarks that Mary's letter must have had a "soothing effect" on Coleridge's mind. This is evident from Coleridge's reply to Mary which is calm and mature. "The whole episode,

so far as we know it, appears to have been highly creditable to Mary Evans, and in no respect discreditable to Coleridge." <sup>19</sup> It is difficult to determine exactly how great an effect the loss of Mary Evans was to have on Coleridge. That it had some effect can be certain.

A number of events must be narrated to complete this period of Coleridge's life and in fact to bring the Mary Evans' event to a close. After leaving the University in 1793, Coleridge had a very brief and very unsuccessful career in the army, enlisting in the 15th Dragoons under the name of Silas Tomkyn Comberbacke. He then returned briefly to Cambridge, only to leave for good in 1794 without obtaining a degree.

In travelling next to Oxford, Coleridge came under the influence of Robert Southey. During the time with Southey, Coleridge took up the idea of Pantisocracy. This was to be a grand scheme for community living on the American continent. "On the banks of the Susquehanna was to be founded a brotherly community, where selfishness was to be extinguished, and the virtues were to reign supreme. No funds were forthcoming; and in 1795, to the chagrin of Coleridge, who seems to have bitterly blamed Southey, the scheme was dropped." <sup>20</sup> Southey evidently lost interest in the plan and his dropping out caused the first break between Coleridge and himself. This on and

off relationship between Coleridge and Southey was to continue for some time. Even for all of his difficulties and frustrations in life, Coleridge never seemed to lose completely the idealistic spirit expressed by his support of Pantisocracy.

On the fourth of October 1795, Coleridge married Sarah Fricker. They began their life together at Clevedon on the Bristol Channel. There probably was a two-fold motivation for this marriage. First, Coleridge needed a partner for the Pantisocracy scheme, and Sarah Fricker was available and willing. Secondly, Coleridge was feeling the loss of Mary Evans and hoped that Sarah could fill this void. Suther points out, "Coleridge evidently tried with considerable good will to believe that he had found what he sought with Sarah Fricker, though he went to the marriage a very reluctant bridegroom, and never quite forgave Southey for pressuring him into it." <sup>21</sup> Southey a few weeks later married Edith Fricker, Sarah's sister, and proved to be a successful husband.

It is only a psychological guessing <sup>g</sup> game to raise the question as to what direction Coleridge's life would have taken had he married Mary Evans. It is <sup>an</sup> interesting question but there appears to be no real answer. Coleridge's wife proved to be an able wife, if somewhat ordinary. She appears to have lacked the real brightness and sparkle that

Coleridge experienced in Mary Evans or his later love, Sarah Hutchinson.

It is no easy task to keep the women in Coleridge's life straight, or to articulate clearly the influence of each on his life and work. Part of the problem arises from the fact that there were three Sarahs involved; Sarah Fricker, his wife, Sara, his daughter and Sara Hutchinson, sister of Mary, who later married William Wordsworth. (Coleridge often referred to the last Sara as Asra, and there is a selection of about twenty-five poems ascribed as the Asra Poems. There appears to be no exact certainty as to how many poems Coleridge wrote to Asra.) <sup>22</sup> It is clear that Sarah Fricker, his wife, could give Coleridge neither the intellectual nor the human stimulation and warmth necessary to satisfy him. That she was a good woman and that Coleridge admired and respected her is clear from his letter to Robert Southey of July 29, 1802. The letter also is an early reference to a final separation that was to come later. It further shows that Coleridge was aware of the wide gap in personality traits between himself and his wife. He says, "For Mrs. Coleridge's mind has very little that is bad in it; it is an innocent mind; but it is light and unimpressible, warm in anger, cold in sympathy, and in all disputes uniformly projects itself forth to recriminate, instead of turning itself

inward with a silent self questioning. Our virtues and our vices are exact antithesis.... Never, I suppose, did the stern match-maker bring together two minds so utterly contrariant in their primary and organical structure." <sup>23</sup> The letter goes on to relate a reconciliation at this time, but it was not to remain permanent.

My guess is that Mary Evans possessed the strength of character and intellect that might have provided a challenge for Coleridge. Such a challenge could have made a significant difference in the direction his life took. As it turned out, Coleridge's loss of Mary Evans and his subsequent unfulfilled love for Sara Hutchinson combined to reinforce the state of dejection which was to haunt Coleridge the rest of his life.

Coleridge first met Sara Hutchinson in October 1799. Actually very little accurate knowledge is known about her or about her relationship with Coleridge. It is very clear that she had a profound effect on his work. It was during the ten years of their relationship that Coleridge wrote his greatest poetry including "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." The original draft of "Dejection An Ode" was written to Sara as a personal letter in April 1802. <sup>24</sup> This poem certainly expresses Coleridge's despair and frustration that the love he felt for Sara must remain unfulfilled. I shall need to discuss this poem more fully

in regard to Coleridge's loss of imagination later. It could only be expressed through his poetic genius. A manuscript kept by Sara and identified as Sara's Poets shows how deep this love must have been. The poems in it were selected by Sara seemingly at random, but do display a cohesiveness. "The thread of unity, though deeply submerged, is Coleridge's love for Asra." <sup>25</sup>

Unlike Mary Evans, Sara Hutchinson was not a physically attractive person. But like Mary, she seemed to be able to bring out the best in Coleridge. His realization that he needed this kind of stimulation and encouragement, and that he was not to find it in his wife was one of the great tragedies of Coleridge's personal life. It may seem that I have spent an inordinate amount of space on Coleridge's personal love affairs. However, the influence they were to have on his work was ultimately significant. Coleridge was never to find the ideal love that he searched for and needed. It is possible that he so idealized love that real human love between himself and a woman on an enduring basis was impossible. He certainly knew and experienced love with Mary Evans and Sara Hutchinson, and its lack of fulfillment and loss affected him deeply along the lines I have tried to indicate.

Coleridge's marriage was destined to have no effect on the character traits he had already shown. He was to

continue to leave work half done and even to put off doing it. He would contract to write for a newspaper or some other publication and would hardly ever live up to the terms of the contract. He agreed to do numerous lectures, yet was hardly ever prepared for the lectures. Here was a man who obviously had a brilliant mind, yet never exercised it fully.

For our purposes, we need only mention a few further influences on Coleridge's life. One of the most significant of these was his close relationship with William Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy. These two must be mentioned together, for while William offered him the intellectual companionship and stimulation he needed, Dorothy gave him the motherly and sisterly support which kept him going. It is probably only fair to say that even though Coleridge gave much to Wordsworth, he probably gained more than he gave. Wordsworth's needs, both intellectual and psychological, were not as great as those of Coleridge.

To realize the significance of Wordsworth's influence, we must note that it was during the initial and early period of their relationship that Coleridge reached the peak of his poetic creativity. On an evening together "The Ancient Mariner" first was planned. Also during this time, came the joint publication of the Lyrical Ballads in 1798 which included some of Coleridge's best poetry.



In this publication, "Wordsworth was to show the real poetry that lies hidden in commonplace subjects, while Coleridge was to treat supernatural subjects to illustrate the common emotions of humanity." <sup>26</sup> Wordsworth could provide incentive and encouragement for Coleridge because he was his equal in terms of creative capacity. He could understand and appreciate the subtle insights of his companion. They shared the romantic ideals and ideas that were being nurtured in the intellectual currents of their time. Like all of Coleridge's relationships, this one with Wordsworth was to have its trying times, however, it was to prove the most constant and enduring of any.

A further influence on Coleridge was his trip to Germany and his association with the German philosophers, especially Kant. Coleridge spent almost a year in Germany between September 1798 and July 1799. This was enough time for him to learn the German language well enough to read it and to translate from it. It was also long enough for him to be exposed to German metaphysics. The depth of this influence can be seen in Biographia Literaria, where Coleridge writes:

The writings of the illustrious sage of Koenigsberg, the founder of the Critical Philosophy, more than any other work, at once invigorated and disciplined my understanding. The originality, the depth, and the compression of the thoughts; the

novelty and subtlety, yet solidity and importance of the distinctions; the adamant chain of the logic, and I will venture to add - (paradox as it will appear to those who have taken their notion of Immanuel Kant from Reviewers and Frenchmen) - the clearness and evidence of the Critique of the Pure Reason; and Critique of the Judgment; of the Metaphysical Elements of Natural Philosophy; and of his Religion within the bounds of Pure Reason, took possession of me as with a giant's hand. After fifteen years' familiarity with them, I still read these and all his other productions with increasing admiration and undiminished delight. 27

I shall deal more fully and specifically with Kant's influence later in the paper. I should only add here that Coleridge came under the influence of many men and philosophies at different periods of his life. He read widely in many fields of interest and incorporated much of what he read into his own work. Yet his poetry and philosophy were his own. He desired above all to present a philosophy meaningful to his age.

Very little needs to be said about Coleridge's addiction to opium. Coleridge probably turned to opium to relieve some of the pain caused by a variety of ailments. He undoubtedly continued it because it offered him an escape from some of the harsh realities of his life. He tried with varying degrees of success to cure the habit, but never fully succeeded. It remained a source of guilt to him.

It was primarily because of his inability to break this addiction that Coleridge placed himself under the care and direction of the Gillman's at Highgate in 1816. Coleridge left the tranquil surroundings of this place only for short periods of time, and spent the remainder of his life with the Gillmans. It was in the steady and calm environment of Highgate that Coleridge produced his greatest and most thoughtful philosophical/theological work, Aids to Reflection.

One major question remains with which we must deal. Why Coleridge stopped writing great poetry, is a question which has puzzled scholars, literary critics and psychologists for years. I do not propose to offer any original solutions or insights, but the whole question is a significant one if we are to gain an understanding of Coleridge's work. Coleridge's most productive period poetically was the six years between 1794-1800. There are a number of theories as to the cause of Coleridge's turning away from poetry. Some have claimed that his lack of fulfillment in love was the root cause of the problem. Others have claimed that opium addiction and other physical ailments robbed him of his poetic genius. There are those who see his turning to philosophy as the cause of his poetic decline. None of these reasons alone really answers the basic question. Love, opium, and

philosophy all played a supporting role in the drama of Coleridge's life. Yet all were subordinate to what was going on inside the man himself. Marshall Suther offers at least one clue to the problem. He says, "An understanding of 'what happened to Coleridge' can only be approached through keeping in view the man Coleridge who is more than the sum of what we can formulate as his artistic interests, his philosophical tendencies, his personal emotional conflicts, a man whose overall 'problem' can only be seen finally, as a religious one, as that of a highly conscious soul in struggle with its spiritual destiny, using every tool, every virtue, and even every vice at its command." <sup>28</sup> Suther is suggesting that for Coleridge the writing of poetry was a religious experience. Poetry was not an end in itself. It was a means used by Coleridge to discover what were some of the basic truths about man's experience, and his attempt to articulate these truths. This quest for a religious experience may well have been a life-long one and not the cause of his turning to metaphysics. It is possible that Coleridge was both poet and metaphysician from the beginning. <sup>29</sup> If this is true, then it would indicate that Coleridge turned to philosophy because poetry could no longer fulfill his needs for religious satisfaction. Dr. Josephine Nettesheim has written, "For Coleridge the

activity involved in writing was neither a matter of verse-making nor a purely artistic experience, but rather a positive kind of religious experience. When he bemoans his diminishing poetic production, he means that this kind of religious experience no longer affords him religious satisfaction." 30 Coleridge then needed to find religious satisfaction and significance in all that he did; when he could not find it in a current endeavor, he turned to another. This constant search for religious experiences and for a religious understanding of life is one of the underlying factors that gives meaning to the complex nature of the life of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

As we have seen, Coleridge's life was full of inconsistencies, full of unfinished endeavors and lost opportunities. His writings covered a wide variety of subject matter and he exhibited equal variety in his means of expression. To be sure, Coleridge left no system of philosophy, no organized theology and he did not fulfill his great promise as a poet. His major theological/philosophical work, Aids to Reflection is not a neat, organized or even systematic piece of writing. Yet, it is possible to see in Coleridge certain patterns and certain unifying principles. In the following sections, I shall attempt to define these basic principles.

## Chapter II

Great poetry is an artistic and aesthetic vehicle for truth. There are certainly a number of serious critics who would argue with such a sweeping generalization about poetry. There is certainly great poetry that has been written solely for the purpose of pleasure and, as we shall see, Coleridge himself acknowledges this fact. However, the basic assertion is fundamentally true. It is especially true for Samuel Taylor Coleridge, for whom the writing of poetry was to become his chief means of expressing what he saw as the basic truths of life and the universe. This is a somewhat dangerous statement in light of the fact that Coleridge himself turned away from poetry because it no longer served his need for expression after the age of approximately twenty-five. Yet, I believe that the themes and the world-view as expressed in the "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" are not significantly different from those in the later writings. The task then of this section of the thesis is to discover the basic meanings of Coleridge's great epic, for only then can we truly comprehend what follows in his literary efforts. In order to do this, we need to follow a three-fold plan. First we need to be aware of Coleridge's understanding of the poet and his task. Second, the poet's definition and use of the

Imagination needs to be explained, and third, the themes of the poem itself must be examined.

Coleridge has given detailed definitions of poetry in two different places in his many writings. In Literary Remains, writing on Shakespeare he says,

Poetry is not the proper antithesis to prose but to science. Poetry is opposed to science, and prose to metre. The proper and immediate object of science is the acquirement, or communication of truth; the proper and immediate object of poetry is the communication of immediate pleasure. This definition is useful; but as it would include novels and other works of fiction; which yet we do not call poems, there must be some additional character by which poetry is not only divided from opposites, but likewise distinguished from disparate, though similar, modes of composition.

Coleridge then goes on to describe this necessary "additional character."

It is that pleasureable emotion, that peculiar state and degree of excitement, which arises in the poet himself in the act of composition; -- and in order to understand this, we must combine a more than ordinary sympathy with the objects, emotions, or incidents contemplated by the poet, consequent on a more than common, sensibility, with a more than ordinary activity of the mind in respect of the fancy and the imagination. Hence is produced a more vivid reflection

of the truths of nature and of the human heart, united with a constant activity modifying and correcting these truths by that sort of pleasureable emotion, which the exertion of our faculties gives in a certain degree;... and hence arises the definition, which I trust is now intelligible, that poetry, or rather a poem, is a species of composition, opposed to science, as having intellectual pleasure for its object, and as attaining its end by the use of language natural to us in a state of excitement, -- but distinguished from other species of composition, not excluded by the former criterion, by permitting a pleasure from the whole consistent with a consciousness of pleasure from the component parts; -- and the perfection of which is, to communicate from each part the greatest immediate pleasure compatible with the largest sum of pleasure on the whole. <sup>1</sup>

At first glance, it would seem that Coleridge has refuted my statement that poetry is a vehicle for truth. This task he assigns not to poetry but to science. It appears that he has so unequivocally separated science and poetry, as to make it impossible for them to be reunited. Yet this is unlike Coleridge, for he did not separate life in such a way as this, but rather, viewed life not as a collection of unrelated parts but as a unified whole. Science and poetry could not, therefore, be arbitrarily separated because they were both part of life. There are



embodied in this lengthy quotation a number of keys to Coleridge's views. Coleridge properly identifies one of the objects of poetry as that of giving pleasure, and it can be assumed here that he means aesthetic enjoyment. At the same time, however, a poem goes deeper than this. For the definition shows that due to the interaction between the creative excitement of the poet and the sympathy of the reader is produced a revelation "... of the truths of nature and of the human heart." I think it is clear that without this interaction and revelation it is possible to achieve rhyme and meter but not poetry in its highest and truest sense. I think we should be careful to note that Coleridge sees the revelation part of poetry as a "reflection" of truth. It is not necessarily truth itself, but truth reflected in the eyes and mind of the poet and the reader. We shall see more clearly how Coleridge accomplishes this reflection when we discuss the themes of "The Ancient Mariner."

This long definition of poetry and the task of the poet is revealing of the great significance Coleridge attributed to his art. It does not tell all, however, for in one of the most important chapters in all of his writing Coleridge discusses

the nature of poetry. <sup>2</sup> He says,

What is poetry? -- is so nearly the same question with, what is a poet? -- that the answer to one is involved in the solution of the other. For it is a distinction resulting from the poetic genius itself, which sustains and modifies the images, thoughts, and emotions of the poet's own mind.

The poet, described in ideal perfection, brings the whole soul of man into activity, with the subordination of its faculties to each other according to their relative worth and dignity. He diffuses a tone of spirit and unity, that blends, and (as it were) fuses each into each, by that synthetic and magical power, to which I would exclusively appropriate the name of Imagination. This power, first put in action by the will and understanding, and retained under their ~~in~~remissive, though gently and unnoticed control... reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness, with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image; the individual with the representative; the sense of novelty and freshness with old and familiar objects; a more than usual state of emotion with more than usual order; judgement ever awake and steady self-possession with enthusiasm and feeling profound or vehement; and while it blends and harmonizes the natural and the artificial, still subordinates art to nature; the manner to the matter; and our admiration of the poet to our sympathy with the poetry ... Finally, Good sense is the Body of poetic genius, Fancy its

Drapery, Motion its Life, and  
Imagination the Soul that is  
everywhere, and in each; and  
forms all into one graceful  
and intelligent whole. 3

Coleridge needs little explanation here, but I do want to emphasize two aspects of this definition. First, Coleridge shows that the task of the poet is to be a unifier. He is the one who fuses the discordant parts of man and life into one "graceful and intelligent whole." Second, he accomplishes his task through the power of the "poetic genius" which for Coleridge means only one thing, the Imagination.

Poetry then is seen as an art form, but one that needs to rise above the mere mechanical techniques of its practitioners. Archibald MacLeish cuts to the heart of the matter when he says in Ars Poetica, "A poem should not mean but be." A poem is a living, vital entity and for Coleridge it comes alive only as it transcends the mechanical and participates in the reality of existence. The poet and poetry can only be true to itself and its calling when it reflects the existential environment from which it emerges. This reflection, this unifying force is labelled by Coleridge as the Imagination to which we must now turn our attention.

Critics, who are not fond of "The Ancient Mariner," have often tried to turn a remark made by Coleridge against

him. The remark is attributed to Coleridge and recorded in the Table Talk for May 31, 1830. Coleridge says, "Mrs. Barbauld once told me that she admired the Ancient Mariner very much but that there were two faults in it, -- it was improbable, and had no moral. As for the probability, I owned that that might admit some question; but as to the want of a moral, I told her that in my own judgement the poem had too much; and that the only or chief fault ... was the obtrusion of the moral sentiment so openly on the reader as a principle or cause of action in a work of such pure imagination." <sup>4</sup> The critics have assumed that Coleridge was slighting his own poem by saying it was a poem of "pure imagination." This shows a lack of understanding and appreciation for what the Imagination was. Also, these same critics have failed to comprehend with what high regard Coleridge held the Imagination, and how essential he believed it to be for truly great artistic achievement.

Coleridge most often defines the Imagination in terms of its corollary faculty, the Fancy. Even though in the definition that follows, it will appear that they are opposites, I. A. Richards warns us that this is not so. He says, "Coleridge often insisted ... that Fancy and Imagination are not exclusive of or inimical to each other." <sup>5</sup> With this in mind, we turn to what Coleridge

himself says:

The Imagination then I consider either as primary, or secondary. The primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime agent of all human perception, [and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I am]. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and differing only in degree, and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create: or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at all events it struggles to idealize and to unify....

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from the order of time and space; while it is blended with, and modified by the empirical phenomenon of the will, which we express by the word Choice. But equally with the ordinary memory the Fancy must receive all its materials ready made from the law of association. 6

It should be clear from this definition of the importance of the Imagination. In fact, even though Coleridge later crossed out the bracketed phrase, he at one time saw the activity of the Imagination as the means whereby man participated in creation. He might well have seen this as the way in which man is created in the image of God. The Imagination is not only the process by which man perceives human knowledge, it is

also the same process or power by which he recreates the assorted parts of life and knowledge into a given unity. Here then is one of the keys to Coleridge's thinking. Unity is achieved and revealed through the Imagination. Without Imagination, the truly creative nature of man and his art ceases. As shall be seen later, Coleridge himself felt that he had lost this power, and this too is one of his reasons for turning from poetry to metaphysics.

I. A. Richards is helpful in further understanding the distinction Coleridge is making between primary and secondary Imagination.

The Primary Imagination is normal perception that produces the usual world of the senses, ... the world of motor-buses, beef-steaks, and acquaintances, the framework of things and events within which we maintain our everyday existence, the world of routine satisfaction of our minimum exigences. The Secondary Imagination, re-forming this world, gives us not only poetry -- in the limited sense in which literary critics concern themselves with it -- but every aspect of the routine world in which it is invested with other values than these necessary for our bare continuance as living beings: all objects for which we can feel love, awe, admiration; every quality beyond the account of physics, chemistry, and the physiology of sense-perception, nutrition,

reproduction and locomotion;  
 every awareness for which a  
 civilized life is preferred by  
 us to an uncivilized. All the  
 supernumerary perceptions which  
 support civilized life are the  
 product of the Secondary  
 Imagination, and though the  
 process by which they are  
 created are best studied in  
 words -- in the highest examples  
 in poetry -- the rest of the  
 fabric of the world of values  
 is of the same origin. Thus,  
 that there should be a  
 connection between poetry  
 and the ordering of life should  
 not surprise. ?

Richards sees poetry as the product of the Secondary Imagination, and at the same time acknowledges the relationship between "poetry and the ordering of life." This is one more reason why I have come to feel that the essential base for understanding Coleridge is in the poetry. Almost all that comes later can be found in the poetry in one place or another, or in Coleridge's thoughts on poetry especially his views on the Fancy and Imagination. Imagination can not be thought of as intellectual activity alone. Richards has grasped this when he says that the Imagination deals with the qualities of love, awe and admiration. Fancy is then viewed by Richards as he summarizes Coleridge's views. "Against both Primary and Secondary Imagination is set Fancy -- which collects and re-arranges, without re-making them,

units of meaning already constituted by Imagination. In Imagination the mind is growing; in Fancy it is merely reassembling products of its past creation, stereotyped, as objects and obeying as such 'fixities and definitives,' the laws of Hartley's Association. The passage from the conception of the mind's doings as Fancy to that of the creative Imagination is the passage from Hartley to Kant." 8

It is the imagination that creates unity out of the diversity of life and Coleridge makes this clear in a passage recorded in the Table Talk. He says, "You may conceive the difference in kind between the Fancy and the Imagination in this way, -- that if the check of the senses and the reason were withdrawn, the first would become delirium, and the last mania. The Fancy brings together images which have no connection natural or moral, but are yoked together by the poet by means of some accidental coincidence.... The Imagination modifies images, and gives unity to variety; it sees all things in one.... There is the epic imagination, the perfection of which is in Milton; and the dramatic, of which Shakespeare is the absolute master." 9 This passage provides a very central insight into Coleridge's thought. "The Imagination ... gives unity to variety." Life itself is not only full of variety but is in a sense variety itself.



Man himself is full of variety, full of tensions pulling and pushing him in various directions. Yet life and man are always somehow incomplete if left disjointed, i. e. as no more than an assemblage of various parts. Therefore, for Coleridge, if man is to be whole, is to be complete, the Imagination is essential in the process of creating, out of the parts, the unity that is truly expressive of man himself. The Imagination then is essential not only for great poetry, it is also equally essential for great living. Richards points out in this regard that Coleridge was naturally a psychologist. A man who was keenly interested in his own mind and how it worked, as well as in the minds of those around him. "He lived at a time when a deep and general change was occurring in man's conception of himself and of his world, and he spent his powers upon the elaboration of a speculative apparatus that would be a kind of microscope with which to study this change and others." <sup>10</sup> Coleridge was trying to discover what formed the basis of man's being, and this could not be accomplished simply by looking at one part of man. It required examination of the whole man understood as a totality, a unity. "Coleridge's criticism is of a kind that requires us, if we are to study it seriously, to reconsider our most fundamental conceptions, our conceptions of man's being -- the nature of his mind

and its knowledge." <sup>11</sup>

This being the case, what then happens to a man when he loses that very power of creation which is the key to self-understanding? What happened to Coleridge when he felt himself losing the power of the Imagination? It marked the end, unfortunately, of the great poetry, for without the Imagination the possibility of the poetic genius was eliminated. Without this possibility, poetry was not worth writing. Coleridge himself shows the depth and significance of the loss in his poem "Dejection: An Ode." This poem was first written on a Sunday evening, April 4, 1802. <sup>12</sup> It is probably true that the poem reflects Coleridge's frustration over the fact that his love for Sara Hutchinson must remain unfulfilled. However, of most importance, is the insights given by Coleridge at the time when he realized that his power of Imagination was being lost. Here is self-understanding at its deepest level. Here is Coleridge using his psychological insights to better understand what was happening to himself. It is difficult to remove brief passages from a lengthy poem and still have them convey their true meaning. However, I have tried to extract the most significant and meaningful lines and hope that they will serve the purpose. In the opening stanza, Coleridge shows that all is not lost; that he is hopeful that nature which has buoyed him up before

will once again come to his aid and provide him with the necessary inspiration to carry on with his writing. We should note as we examine these lines that for Coleridge the moon was a good and positive symbol. In much of his poetry, Coleridge reversed the usual order of sun and moon equalling good and evil respectively. The moon as seen here is a symbol of hope.

I see the Old Moon in her lap, foretelling  
 The coming on of rain and squally blast.  
 And oh! that even now the gust were swelling  
 And the slant night-shower driving loud and fast!  
 Those sounds which oft have raised me, whilst they awed,  
 And sent my soul abroad,  
 Might now, perhaps, their wanted impulse give,  
 Might startle this dull pain, and make it move and live!

Here is the first indication that something is going wrong. Coleridge is voicing his plea that the powerful effects of nature might jolt his Imagination back to its healthy and primary place in his character and personality. Yet he realizes that the battle is a relatively hopeless one, one that has already been lost. He records in stanza three:

My genial spirits fail;  
 And what can these avail  
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?  
 It were a vain endeavor,  
 Though I should gaze forever,  
 On that green light that lingers in the west:  
 I may not hope from outward forms to win  
 The passion and the life whose fountains are within.

Even nature, as powerful as it may be, is powerless to overcome Coleridge's internal problem by its external means.

The real climax of the poem occurs in the sixth stanza.

The admission is made. The Imagination is gone.

There was a time when, though my path was rough,  
This joy within me dallied with distress,  
And all misfortunes were but as stuff.

Whence Fancy made me dreams of happiness:  
For hope grew round me, like the twining vine,  
And fruits and foliage, not my own, seemed mine.  
But now afflictions bow me down to earth:  
Nor care I that they rob me of my mirth,  
But oh! each visitation

Suspends what nature gave me at my birth.  
My shaping spirit of Imagination.

For not to think of what I needs must feel,  
But to be still and patient, all I can;

And haply by abstruse research to steal  
From my own nature all the natural man --

This was my sole resource, my only plan:  
Till that which suits a part infects the whole,  
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul. 13

Not only does this stanza represent the deep despair experienced by Coleridge, but also, it reveals another basic fact about his views on the Imagination. He says that each visitation of affliction takes away that which was given to him at birth. Therefore, it is safe to say that the Imagination is a God-given power and one that cannot be acquired. However, it must be noted also that it is through human effort that the Imagination is perfected and allowed to reach its maximum potential. I believe Coleridge would say that the Imagination must be used constantly or else its power will begin to fail, much like the athlete, who if he fails to practice will lose the muscle tone necessary for peak performance. It is not lack of use, however, which Coleridge blames for his loss.

Rather it is his "afflictions" by which we may safely assume he means his physical ailments, his addiction to opium, his unfulfilled loves, and his hereditary and childhood environmental conditions that led to his inability to finish a job once he started it. Even if the cause or causes of his loss cannot be definitely determined, we can be absolutely certain of the results. Samuel Taylor Coleridge ceased writing the great poetry of which he was capable.

It should be pointed out that throughout this discussion of the Imagination, I have made no attempt to question its reality. I have tried to describe and understand it in Coleridge's terms. The Imagination is not something that can be easily defined or described. It has no shape and no boundaries. It can only be felt and experienced emotionally and psychologically. It is experienced through the reading of great poetry, when the reader realizes and comprehends the creative power and ability of the poet who rises above the sheer mechanical linking of words and objects. For Coleridge, this innate psychological power was extremely real, and its loss was powerfully felt. For him, unity and greatness in poetry could no longer be achieved. New ways of linking revelation and reason must be discovered. The journey once begun could never really end, but had to continue until heart and mind were truly one, until the

whole man was seen and understood in relation to a whole world. <sup>14</sup> In my limited judgement, Coleridge came closer to his goal when he wrote "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" than anything he did before or after this event. In this great work, he achieves his purpose, for man truly becomes a unity; a unity that is created between man and his world, the world of nature. More than anywhere else Coleridge's Imagination is shown working at its peak of creative power in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

During the first year that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbors, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colors of imagination. The sudden charm which accidents of light and shade, which moonlight or sunset diffused over a known and familiar landscape, appeared to represent the practicability of combining both. These are the poetry of nature. The thought suggested itself -- ... -- that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions, as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real. And real in this sense they have been to every human being who, from whatever source of delusion, has at any time believed himself under supernatural agency. For the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life; the characters and incidents were to be

such as will be found in every village and its vicinity, where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them, when they present themselves.

In this idea originated the plan of the LYRICAL BALLADS; in which it was agreed, that my endeavors should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

With this view I wrote THE ANCIENT MARINER. 15

Out of this decision to collaborate on the publication of the Lyrical Ballads, was born "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Coleridge's task was to begin with the supernatural and so transform it by the Imagination that the final creation would be seen in terms of reality, in terms of the truth and nature of real life. How well he succeeded can be determined only by examining the poem itself. This will be accomplished by first trying to see how Coleridge uses the Imagination to create the images

and symbols in the poem. Second, the theme or themes of the poem need to be discovered and illuminated, and last it will be necessary to step back and take a long view of the work in order to realize its ultimate reality and value. Only when this is done will it be possible to comprehend and appreciate the unity within the poem, and the unity it represents between man and nature.

J. L. Lowes' The Road to Xanadu presents more clearly and completely the process of the Imagination than anywhere else. He has, as it were, opened up Coleridge's library in order to show that many of the images in "The Ancient Mariner" come directly from the author's reading. Coleridge must have had a tremendous ability and capacity for retaining bits and pieces of information often read many years before being used in a poem. Frequently these ideas and images can be traced through some of Coleridge's rather unorganized notebooks. Other ideas must have been stored only in his memory. After dealing quite specifically with some of the entries in Coleridge's Note Book Lowes says,

Now thanks to a somewhat searching interrogation of half a dozen entries in the Note Book, we have assured ourselves on two points of extreme significance. In the first place, Coleridge ... read with an eye which habitually pierced to the secret spring of poetry beneath the crust of fact. And this means that items or details the most unlikely might, through some poetic potentiality



discovered or divined, find lodgement in his memory. In the second place, Coleridge not only read books with minute attention, but he also habitually passed from any given book he read to the books to which the book referred. And that, in turn, makes it possible to follow him into the most remote and unsuspected fields. And his gleanings from those fields transformed but recognizable, will meet us again and again as we proceed. For to follow Coleridge through his readings is to retrace the obliterated vestiges of creation. 16

Lowes' book needs to be read in its entirety to appreciate the determined and amazing job of research he has done in order to verify the sources of Coleridge's images. A few examples will suffice for the purpose of this paper. In the fourth part of the poem are found references to water snakes:

Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
I watched the water snakes:  
They moved in tracks of shining white,  
And when they reared, the elfish light        275  
Fell off in hoary flakes.

Within the shadow of the ship  
I watched their rich attire:  
Blue, glossy green, and velvet black,  
They coiled and swam; and every track        280  
Was a flash of golden fire. 17

At the time when he wrote "The Ancient Mariner" Coleridge had never been to sea. He could not know from first hand experience that fish swimming in the wake of a ship give off a flashing appearance. Where then did the idea for the sea snakes come from? Lowes points out that

Coleridge was an admirer of Joseph Priestley and that he had read Priestley's Opticks or his History and Present State of Discoveries relating to Vision Light and Colours. 18

In Priestley's work is a chapter on "Light from Putrescent Substances" in which "... occurred a tantalizing account of the phosphorescent sea, and of fishes which, 'in swimming, left so luminous a track behind them, that both their size and species might be distinguished by it.'" 19

Yet this is not the end of the search. Lowes goes on to show that Coleridge was led by a footnote in Priestley's Opticks to the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society (Abridged), Volume V. "The account of the fishes in the Transactions, to which Priestley had referred, turns out to be taken from certain observations of Father Bourzes on 'Luminous Appearances in the Wakes of Ships in the Sea,' extracted from that vast repository of universal information, the Letters of the Missionary Jesuits. The pertinent sentences are these, "Not only the Wake of a Ship produces this Light, but Fishes also in swimming leave behind 'em a luminous Track; which is so bright that one may distinguish the Largeness of the Fish, and know of what Species it is. I have sometimes seen a great many Fishes playing in the Sea, which have made a kind of artificial Fire in the Water, that was very pleasant to look on. 20

Yet even this is not the end, for Lowes goes on to show that at least seven separate sources are used to create the ten lines cited above from "The Ancient Mariner."

He summarizes his findings this way,

Those, then, at last, are the raw materials. The result is all of them and more of them -- it is a new creation. The fishes which Father Bourzes saw in tropical seas and Bartam in a little lake in Florida, and the luminous blue and green protozoa which Captain Cook observed in the Pacific and the many-hued, ribbon-like creatures that Sir Richard Hawkins marvelled at off the Azores, and Dampier's water-snakes in the South Seas, and Leemius's coiling, rearing marine serpents of the North, and Falconer's gambolling porpoises and dolphins -- all of them or some of them -- have leaped together like scattered dust at the trumpet of the resurrection, and been fused by a flash of imaginative vision into the elfin creatures of a hoary deep that never was and that will always be. The shaping spirit of imagination must have materials on which to work, and a memory steeped in travel-lore was this time the reservoir on which it drew. 21

All of this, however, adds up to only the necessary ingredients. Out of these must come something not only new, but something that represents a unity out of all this diversity. It is not enough to think that Coleridge drew these images from his memory and then added them up. The Imagination does not function simply as an adding machine. Lowes says, "I do not believe that any conscious piecing

together, however dexterous, of remembered fragments could conceivably have alone wrought the radiant forms which the Mariner saw.<sup>22</sup> How then are the images fused into a unity? How are the ideas recreated into one new totality? This is the basic question and yet there is no truly definitive answer. We can be sure that the Imagination worked both on a conscious and unconscious level, recalling and reworking the images brought before it. We have seen above the great variety of images used to create the water snakes referred to in the fourth part of the poem. The results are also obvious. Coleridge created water snakes; not just something which resembled all the images that crossed his mind. It is only possible for us to see the beginning and the end, the diversity and the unity, and to know that in between the power of a great mind had been at work, dissolving, diffusing, and dissipating in order to recreate.<sup>23</sup> The process can only be understood and experienced through the appreciation of its magnificent results. It is out of this kind of process that "The Ancient Mariner" was created. Only when it is understood that this kind of process is at work, can the poem be understood for what it really is, and appreciated for the message it sets forth.

"The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is a religious poem. It is more than this, but it is this first. "If ever a poet

set about his work with a deliberate religious purpose, Coleridge is that man." <sup>24</sup> Yet the poem must not be seen as religious in an abstract sense. It is far from that, for it deals directly with the basic facts of human existence. The poem, therefore, deals with reality. <sup>25</sup> It deals on a very obvious level with the age-old problem of good and evil, of crime and punishment. It also takes the next necessary step, and tries to speak to the problem of atonement and forgiveness. In so doing, Coleridge will reveal what for him becomes paramount to his understanding of life, and that is, the ultimate unity existing between man and nature, between man and God.

Technically, of course, the poem is a masterpiece. It impressively fulfills all the requirements Coleridge had developed and set out for great poetry. It gives pleasure, reveals beauty and reality, and is expressive of truth. The diversity of themes and content is held together by the powerfully drawn figure of the mariner.

As shall be seen, Coleridge makes abundant use of symbolism. Robert Penn Warren gives a timely warning concerning Coleridge's use of this device, which must be kept in mind as the poem is read. He says, " A symbol ... cannot be arbitrary -- it has to participate in the unity of which it is representative, and this means that the symbol has a deeper relation to the total structure of

meaning than its mechanical place in plot, situation or discourse." <sup>26</sup> Symbolism for Coleridge is massive, and operates on more than one level. Each symbol or series of symbols participates in the creation of the unity of the poem. That is to say, each reader of the poem will miss the point if he looks for a one equals one kind of relationship in the symbolism employed by the author. "A symbol implies a body of ideas which may be said to be fused in it ... a symbol may be the condensation of several themes and not a sign for one." <sup>27</sup> Coleridge's use of symbolism then must be viewed in terms of depth. Writing in The Statesman's Manual, Coleridge expresses his views on symbolism by differentiating it from allegory. He says, "Now an allegory is but a translation of abstract notions into a picture-language, which is itself nothing but an abstraction from objects of the senses; ... On the other hand, a symbol is characterized by a translucence of the special in the individual, or of the general in the special, or of the universal in the general; above all by the translucence of the eternal through and in the temporal. It always partakes of the reality which it renders intelligible, and while it enunciates the whole, abides itself as a living part in that unity of which it is the representative." <sup>28</sup> The important thing to realize from this is that the symbol must participate in and be a part

of that which it represents. Coleridge illustrates this in his lecture on Cervantes' Don Quixote. "'Here comes a sail' -- (that is, a ship) is a symbolical expression. 'Behold our lion!' when we speak of some gallant soldier, is allegorical." 29 Symbolism then if it is to be representative of life and truth must be part of these realities and not just mere representations for them.

The first major theme presented in the poem is that of sin. The crime or sin is the motiveless killing of the albatross by the mariner. Some critics have tried to concoct a motive for the murder, but there is nothing within the poem to identify a motive. Warren, therefore, concludes that the act symbolizes the Fall. 30 Carried to its logical conclusion the act and its subsequent results symbolize man's nature and condition. Man can do little or nothing to overcome his sinfulness. Man will continue to murder friendly albatrosses. It is interesting to note that Coleridge believed he had never achieved a satisfactory understanding of original sin or the Fall. He acknowledges its primacy, but confesses its mystery. "A Fall of some sort or other -- the creation, as it were, of the non-absolute -- is the fundamental postulate of the moral history of man. Without this hypothesis, man is unintelligible; with it, every phenomenon is explicable. The mystery itself is too profound for human insight." 31

Some critics would claim that the punishment suffered by the mariner and his colleagues is not commensurate with the act of killing a bird. In Coleridge's terms, however, the bird is more than just an isolated albatross. We note that the ship has been blown, by a storm, to the South Pole. The mariners seem to be marooned and doomed to destruction in this cruel part of the world. But the albatross, in its arrival, is looked upon as a good sign, a sign of hope. Not only is the bird a sign of hope, but also, it is endowed with human and Christian characteristics.

As if it had been a Christian soul,           65  
We hailed it in God's name. 32

The gloss reports that the albatross "... was received with great joy and hospitality." 33 With the arrival of the bird, the wind changes and the ship once again turns north, proving to all that the bird was a good omen. It is just at this point that the mariner kills the bird. The gloss says "The ancient mariner inhospitably killeth the pious bird of good omen." 34 The mariner, then, kills the bird which has been faithful and which has brought the men forth from probable destruction. However, the question can still be asked why something so seemingly insignificant as a bird could bring so much pain? Warren points out that by killing a bird, Coleridge brings forth a humanitarian motif. "But we must remember that the humanitarianism itself is a



superficial manifestation of a deeper concern, a sacramental conception of the universe for the bird<sup>is</sup> hailed 'in God's name,' both literally and symbolically, and in the end we have, therefore, in the crime against Nature a crime against God. If a man had been killed, the secular nature of the crime -- a crime then against man -- would have overshadowed the ultimate significance involved." 35 Here it can be seen how important it is to understand Coleridge's use of symbolism as outlined above. For the bird -- as a part of Nature -- represents and is Nature. Further, Nature -- as a part of God's creation -- is representative of the Creator. As Warren has shown above, Coleridge did hold to a sacramental view of Nature which allowed him to equate God and Nature.

It seems quite unfair, however, that the other mariners are also punished by death. However, Coleridge shows that they participate in the mariner's crime against nature. First they condemn him for killing the bird that brought good luck.

And I had done a hellish thing,  
 And it would work 'em woe:  
 For all averred, I had killed the bird  
 That made the breeze to blow.  
 Ah wretch! said they, the bird to slay,      95  
 That made the breeze to blow.

With the lifting of the fog and mist, comes a sense of well-being and so they praise the mariner's action.

Nor dim nor red, like God's own head,  
 The glorious Sun uprist:  
 They all averred, I had killed the bird  
 That brought the fog and mist 100  
 'Twas right, said they, such birds to slay,  
 That bring the fog and mist. 36

The gloss further tells us that they made themselves "accomplices" to the act when they justify it by its results of clearing the fog. They judge the mariner's act not as an act against Nature but by its consequences. "They have violated the sacramental conception of the universe, by making man's convenience the measure of an act." 37

It is convenient to make two technical remarks here. In the two stanzas immediately above, Coleridge achieves emphasis and unity by repeating almost exactly a line in the first stanza ("For all averred, I had killed the bird") in the second. Also, one wonders why the other mariners must die when the ancient one lives. In Coleridge's terms, they deserve to die for their participation in the crime. However, the main reason for killing them is to focus the reader's attention on the ancient mariner, on his crime, punishment, and subsequent redemption.

It would appear that the mariners were lulled into a false sense of security by the fair breeze that brings them north. Their joy is short-lived for with their arrival at the equator they are becalmed. There they are to remain,

both to receive their punishment and to do penance, and there the mariner achieves his atonement. The depth of the torment and suffering is visualized by Coleridge in many lines, such as the following which are typical.

The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs                   125  
Upon the slimy sea. 38

In part three of the poem, a skeleton ship arrives bringing death to the other mariners. The climax of the poem is reached in the next section for there the mariner must suffer his penance alone.

Alone, alone, all, all alone,  
Alone on a wide wide sea!  
And never a saint to pity on  
My soul in agony 39   235

Part of the mariner's penance is his realization of his separation from other human beings and from God. His separation from God is shown by his inability to offer any kind of prayer.

I looked to Heaven, and tried to pray:  
But or ever a prayer had gusht,   245  
A wicked whisper came, and made  
My heart as dry as dust. 40

Still the mariner does not comprehend the essential nature of his crime, for he is able to experience the beauty of dead men around him while still despising "the creatures of the calm" as the gloss tells us.

The many men, so beautiful!  
 And they all dead did lie:  
 And a thousand, thousand slimy things  
 Lived on; and so did I.<sup>41</sup>

What the mariner has done is to repeat his earlier crime against nature by rejecting the slimy creatures. The essential unity between man and nature is still broken.

The full impact of the poem is reached in the last four stanzas of part four. We meet again the water snakes mentioned above in conjunction with the Imagination.

Beyond the shadow of the ship,  
 I watched the water-snakes:  
 They moved in tracks of shining white,  
 And when they reared, the elfish light  
 Fell off in hoary flakes. 275

Within the shadow of the ship  
 I watched their rich attire:  
 Blue, glossy green; and velvet black,  
 They coiled and swam; and every track  
 Was a flash of golden fire. 280

O happy living things! no tongue  
 Their beauty might declare:  
 A spring of love gushed from my heart,  
 And I blessed them unaware: 285  
 Sure my kind saint took pity on me,  
 And I blessed them unaware.

The selfsame moment I could pray;  
 And from my neck so free  
 The Albatross fell off, and sank  
 Like lead into the sea. 42 290

With the blessing of the ugly snakes, the broken unity between man and nature is restored. At the same time, the relationship between the mariner and God is healed and the

mariner is able to pray. William Temple might call this reunification the at-one-ment, <sup>43</sup> for man and nature, man and God are at one with each other. Life is once again reaffirmed as a totality; Coleridge has affirmed in powerful language the essential unity that exists between man and nature. Just as the killing of the albatross was done without motive, so also is the atonement achieved subconsciously. Neither the separation, nor the reunification is given any motive by Coleridge. It is man's condition to be fallen, to be separated. It is God's action alone and not man's initiative that allows the reconciliation to take place. This recalls to mind St. Paul's magnificent phrase, "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me."

Coleridge has further strengthened the theme of unification by the subtle use of symbolism. When the mariner's reconciliation begins, the moon is in the sky. The Moon is representative of good while the Sun is equated with evil. The albatross, the bird of good omen, arrives during moonlight. As soon as the crime is committed, the Sun comes up and the suffering begins. Coleridge helps to unify his long poem by the use of symbolism, just as the poem itself symbolizes the unity between Man and Nature.

Even though the climax has already been achieved one more step needs to be taken. The mariner is returned to his own country. Upon his arrival at the harbor, he is greeted by

a holy hermit. Critics are not agreed upon who the hermit represents. My own judgement is that the hermit represents Man. The mariner has already been reunited with Nature. Now he is once again accepted into the fellowship with Man by a representative man.

The final unity is achieved when the mariner realizes that having once been saved he has a responsibility, in fact, a compulsion to tell his story to others. The gloss puts it this way: "The ancient mariner earnestly entreateth the Hermit to shrive him; and the penance of life falls on him. And ever and anon throughout his future life an agony constraineth him to travel from land to land, and to teach by his own example, love and reverence to all things that God made and loveth." <sup>44</sup> The mariner concludes his tale with this observation and solemn warning:

Farewell, farewell! but this I tell	610
To thee, thou Wedding-Guest!	
He prayeth well, who loveth well	
Both man and bird and beast.	
He prayeth best, who loveth best	
All things both great and small;	615
For the dear God who loveth us,	
He made and loveth all. <sup>45</sup>	

The God who created Man is the same God who created all things. If Man is to live, it can only be in union with God, and this means in union with all of Nature.

To arrive at some conclusion about the poem, we need to keep two factors in mind. First, the poem itself stands

before us as a symbol of Life. It represents Life because it is the story of Man and his struggle to be one with himself and God. Second, Warren points out, "... that the writing of a poem is simply a specialized example of a general process which leads to salvation." <sup>46</sup> Like the mariner, Coleridge needs to tell his story. As was pointed out earlier, one of the unifying forces in Coleridge's own life was his constant search for religious truth and significance in life. <sup>47</sup> "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is one product of that search. In my own mind, it is the clearest statement made by Coleridge on this subject.

The Romantic poets ... felt that they had to justify their existence. However great the claims they made for poetry and however sweeping their gestures and rolling their periods, they made those claims because the need for justification was becoming acute. The claim they made was that poetry gives truth; or if they were as subtle as Coleridge, they sought to establish an intimate and essential connection between truth and poetry on psychological as well as metaphysical grounds ... The main problem of reconciliation for Coleridge was that between poetry and religion, or morality, for since these were twin passions it was necessary for him to develop some vital connection between them if he was to be happy.... The precarious solution which Coleridge attained was, of course, one aspect of his doctrine of the creative unity of the mind, which appears and reappears in his work and which is his great central

insight and great contribution to  
modern thought. 48

This creative unity was nowhere more clearly or  
magnificently expressed than in "The Rime of the Ancient  
Mariner."



### Chapter III

In the previous chapter, I tried to indicate that the basis for wholeness and unity in Coleridge lies primarily in his great poetry through the use of Imagination. The basic unity that is established is one between Man and Nature (God). Underlying this unity is a basic awareness by Coleridge of the relationship which exists between Revelation and Reason, and also between faith and reason. This has already partially been seen above when we discovered Coleridge's view of the relation between the heart (emotion) and the mind.<sup>1</sup> Now it is necessary to attempt to define more specifically this relationship between revelation and reason, and in so doing to demonstrate the correlation that exists between the aesthetic and artistic writing and the philosophical/theological work.

A striking parallel exists between the way in which Coleridge defines and differentiates between Reason and Understanding and what he has done with the Imagination and Fancy. It would appear that Coleridge has tried to carry over the distinctions he elaborated for poetry, into the area of his religious thinking. For many, Coleridge's development of Reason and its distinction from the Understanding has provided the key to Coleridge's religious position. Not all would agree, however. Boulger says, "It does not appear to me, in the ultimate sense, that Coleridge's positive religious position can be interpreted

in the light of this formal distinction, even though, as he used it, the distinction served as a convenient means to make negative criticisms on the age." <sup>2</sup> One of the major problems, of course, is that Coleridge never completely developed his thought. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" has a completeness about it which is lacking elsewhere. The Poem states a position, develops it and draws a conclusion. There is a coherence. This is not true for instance in Aids to Reflection. Coleridge allowed himself to get side-tracked and, therefore, so does a modern reader. Nevertheless, certain basic statements can be made to indicate the affinity between Coleridge the poet and Coleridge the religious thinker.

"A clear working definition of the reason is not forthcoming from Coleridge and those who have looked for one have been disappointed.... Coleridge is fairly clear that reason is the faculty of ideas, [which are] most notably religious ideas ... but a direct perusal of definitions will not take us further than this." <sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this paper, there is no real need to go further than this. Coleridge has defined Reason as, "... the power of universal and necessary convictions, the source and substance of truths above sense, and having their evidence in themselves.... On the other hand, the judgements of the Understanding are binding only in relation to the objects

of our senses, which we reflect under the forms of the understanding. It is as Leighton rightly defines it, 'the faculty judging according to sense.'" <sup>4</sup> The point to be grasped is that just as before in his artistic distinction between Imagination and Fancy, Coleridge has qualitatively distinguished between Reason and Understanding. Care should be taken not to equate Imagination with Reason and Fancy with Understanding. However, the correlation in method seems evident. Coleridge then applies the same kind of methodological procedures in his religious work as he does in the poetry. This is one step in establishing unity between the artist and the religious thinker.

Just as the Imagination was the creative and unifying power, so also is Reason. "It is the office, and as it were, the instinct of reason to bring a unity into all our conceptions and several knowledges. On this all system depends; and without this we could reflect connectedly neither on nature nor our own minds. Now this is possible only on the assumption or hypothesis of a One as the ground and cause of the universe, and which, in all succession and through all changes, is subject neither of time nor change. The One must be contemplated as eternal and immutable." <sup>5</sup> On the surface, at least, this sounds like a thoroughly modern concept. How easy it is to read

here Paul Tillich's or John Robinson's phrase, "the Ground of Being." To carry this idea to its conclusion, necessitates turning to "Appendix B" of The Statesman's Manual.

The completing power which unites clearness with depth, the plentitude of the sense with the comprehensibility of the understanding, is the imagination, impregnated with which the understanding itself becomes intuitive, and a living power. The reason ... as the integral spirit of the regenerated man, reason substantiated and vital, one only yet manifold, overseeing all, and going through all understanding; the breath of the power of God, and a pure influence from the glory of the Almighty; which remaining in itself regenerateth all powers, and in all ages entering into holy souls maketh them friends of God and prophets; this reason without being either the sense, the understanding, or the imagination, contains all three within itself, even as the mind contains all its thoughts, and is present in and through them all; or as the expression pervades the different features of an intelligent countenance. Each individual must bear witness of it to his own mind, even as he describes life and light: and with silence of light it describes itself, and dwells in us only as far as we dwell in it. It can not in strict language be called a faculty, much less a personal property, of any human mind. He, with whom it is present, can as little appropriate it, whether totally or by partition, as he can claim ownership in the breathing air or make an inclosure in the cape of heaven. 6

For Coleridge, then, the reason is not only the uniting force in the universe, but also, it is a power that is

incapable of being defined in a very definitive manner. So then a first step is forged in establishing the relationship between the prose and the poetry. The reason is not the Imagination. However, they are correspondingly similar, each in its own field.

The next step is to look briefly at Coleridge's thoughts on the correlation between revelation and reason. In doing this, I am using faith and revelation interchangeably which I believe is not unfair to Coleridge. It should be noted that even though revelation, e. g. a word or message from God, is not a specific theme of "The Ancient Mariner," nevertheless, the mariner is in some way inspired to bless the ugly snakes and thereby is restored to life. Even though this was not conscious on his part, the mariner was a recipient of a revelation. So often, even today, we are fearful of letting reason be the judge of our faith. As the tools of Biblical and theological criticism are sharpened, however, the realization is reached that our faith must be tested and must withstand the scrutiny of reason. Coleridge was not afraid of the dawning criticism of his own time, in fact, he welcomed it, used it, and in so doing gives us the courage to submit our faith and ourselves to reason's judgement. Coleridge puts it this way in Aids to Reflection:

Whatever is against right reason, that

no faith can oblige us to believe. For though reason is not the positive and affirmative measure of our faith, and our faith ought to be larger than (speculative) reason, and take something into her heart, that reason can never take into her eye; yet in all our creed there can be nothing against reason. If reason justly contradicts an article, it is not of the household of faith....

He that speaks against his own reason, speaks against his own conscience: and therefore it is certain, no man serves God with a good conscience, who serves him against reason.

By the eye of reason through the telescope of faith, that is, revelation, we may see what without this telescope we could never have known to exist.... In no case can true reason and a right faith oppose each other. ?

Later, in an appendix to The Statesman's Manual, Coleridge enlarges upon the part that reason and faith play in the formation of the whole man.

Reason and Religion differ only as a two-fold application of the same power. But if we are obliged to distinguish, we must ideally separate. In this sense I affirm that reason is the knowledge of the laws of the whole considered as one; and as such it is contra-distinguished from the understanding, which concerns itself exclusively with the quantities, qualities and relations of particulars in time and space.... The reason ... is the science of the universal, having the idea of oneness and allness as its two elements or

primary factors. The reason first manifests itself in man by the tendency to the comprehension of all as one. We can neither rest in an infinite that is not at the same time a whole, nor in a whole that is not infinite. Hence the natural man is always in a state either of resistance or of captivity to the understanding and the fancy, which can not represent totality without limit: and he either loses the one in the striving after the infinite, that is, atheism with or without polytheism, or he loses the infinite in the striving after the one, and then sinks into anthropomorphic monotheism.

The rational, intellect, therefore, taken abstractedly and unbalanced, did, in itself, and in its consequences form the original temptation, through which men fell: and in all ages has continued to originate the same, even from Adam, in whom we all fell, to the atheists who deified the human reason in the person of a harlot during the earlier period of the French Revolution.

To this tendency, therefore, religion, as the consideration of the particular and individual (in which respect it takes up and identifies with itself the excellence of the understanding), but of the individual, as it exists and has its being in the universal (in which respect it is one with the pure reason) -- to this tendency, I say, religion assigns the due limits, and is the echo of the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden. Hence in all the ages and countries of civilization religion has been the parent and fosterer of the fine arts, as of poetry, music, painting, and the like, the common essence of which consists in a similar union of the universal and the individual. In this union, moreover, is contained the true sense of the ideal. Under

the old Law the altar, the curtains, the priestly vestments, and whatever else was to represent the beauty of holiness, had an ideal character: and the Temple itself was a masterpiece of ideal beauty.

There exists in the human being, at least in man fully developed, no mean symbol of tri-unity in reason, religion, and the will. For each of the three, though a distinct agency, implies and demands the other two, and loses its own nature at the moment that from distinction it passes into division or separation. The perfect frame of a man is the perfect frame of a state: and in the light of this idea we must read Plato's Republic. 8

It is in taking the third and final step in this exploration for unity that it becomes evident how essential this search for a whole man becomes. It was seen in "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" that the basis for unity was in the relationship established between Man and Nature. In the early poetry, this relationship was of utmost importance to Coleridge. Yet it is this seemingly essential relationship that Coleridge, in fact, discards in the later writing. "The communion of man and Nature which had been so central to the early poetry broke apart completely in his Christian thinking, leaving a wide chasm between spirit and Nature. Once man came to be conceived of as primarily spiritual, in the activity of will, oppressed by the weight of Original Sin, the result was naturally a reorientation of man in Nature. But Coleridge was not able to rehabilitate



Nature along the traditional Christian pattern." 9

There appears to be no connection at all between the Nature of the poetry and the Nature as it is defined in the prose work. In Aids to Reflection, Coleridge tries to express his understanding of Nature in terms of continuity. "The power which we call Nature, may be thus defined: a power subject to the law of continuity ... which law the human understanding, by a necessity arising out of its own constitution, can conceive only under the form of cause and effect." 10

Here then is unity broken. In my own judgement, Coleridge never achieved such a satisfactory definition of Nature as he did in "The Ancient Mariner." Boulger comments on what this break with the past meant to Coleridge in terms of poetry. "The sustenance which generations of earlier poets had taken from Nature considered as the handiwork of God was denied to Coleridge; ... The thinking Christian could no longer pursue his God through the analogies of Nature. Henceforth Coleridge's poetry was to be written in two moods, one looking backward mournfully upon the days when Nature had been his friend through the interpenetration of subject and object, the other looking forward, in hope but not enthusiasm, to the time when the soul would be able to free itself from matter for union with a highly intellectualized version of Divinity." 11

So then we are forced back to where we began, to the man himself. We have seen that much of what Coleridge wrote in each of his major fields of endeavor is fairly consistent and unified, but not all can be so related. It is the man himself and the purpose he brings to his work that provides the only real and true basis for unity in the works of diversity. Sanders defines the purpose this way, "In Coleridge's teachings there is a highly significant effort to reconcile love of freedom with love of truth and a persistent desire for unity -- intellectual, social, and religious." <sup>12</sup> The unity which can be found in Coleridge is there because this was a man, a genius, on a search: a search for the meaning of life, a search for an understanding of man which meant that he wished also for self-understanding, and a search for truth. Only when the realization and understanding of Coleridge's search is kept in mind, is it possible to discern the changes, the development, and the unity in the writing of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

## Conclusion

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's life and writing has been described as a search. Usually a search or a journey has an ending, a conclusion. In Coleridge's case, no true end can be found. As he himself realized, truth is an elusive goal. It cannot be seen, grasped, or understood in any physical sense. In reality, truth can only be experienced. What Coleridge came to know was the fact that truth can never be known in its totality, for truth encompasses all of life and no man can know it all. What is of crucial importance, however, is that Man continues to search. This is Coleridge's greatest legacy. By his own example, he showed that men must always face and examine life in the spirit of inquiry, even when this may mean the abandonment of cherished ideas and ideals. Only as a man reaches out for truth can he begin to discover unity or wholeness in himself. As has been seen, Coleridge's search led him through poetry, philosophy and theology. In many areas, explicit correlation can be discovered among the three basic disciplines. At other times, Coleridge's search forces him to break with the past and forge a new trail, or make a new beginning. This takes courage and courage is as necessary today as it was in the Romantic era.

Courage is needed and found both within and outside of the Church. The past is no longer accepted on its own merit. Men and women are constantly questioning and

searching for new answers. Coleridge certainly would have understood and applauded men like Bishop Robinson and Bishop Pike. Here are men who in searching for ideals are unafraid of where the journey may end.

Man today is torn and pulled by many conflicting and demanding pressures. Our age is looking for that which can stabilize our existence, and Coleridge says that only in Man himself is unity to be found. Only the man who thinks and feels and searches has any hope of achieving wholeness, and wholeness or fullness must be everyman's goal. In his autobiography, Report to Greco, Nikos Kazantzakis describes this search for meaning in life as an ascent, always an upward climb. He also tells us to, "Reach what you cannot!"<sup>1</sup> Reach out for truth and unity even though you can never fully possess it for if man aims for anything less, he will never achieve wholeness, he will never be a man. This search may lead to God as it eventually did for Coleridge who remarked, "God ... is the cohesion and the oneness of all things."<sup>2</sup> Man has neither to fear the search or its end, as long as he continues the journey.

Coleridge's journey ended on July 25, 1834. In a letter to John Sterling, he offered his own epitaph.

Epitaph on a Poet little known, yet  
better known by the Initials of  
his Name than by the Name itself. S.T.C.

Stop, Christian Passer-by! Stop, Child of God!  
And read with gentle heart. Beneath this sod  
A Poet lies: or that, which once seem'd He.  
O lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C.  
That He, who many a year with toilsome breath  
Found Death in Life, may here find Life in Death.  
Mercy for praise -- to be forgiven for Fame  
He ask'd and hoped thro' Christ. DO THOU the Same. 3

1. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Complete Works, ed. W. G. T. Shedd (New York, 1884). This reference hereafter cited as Works.

2. Webster's Third New International Dictionary, ed. Philip Babcock Grove (Springfield, 1965), p. 2501.

3. Basil Willey, Nineteenth Century Studies (New York, 1949), p. 1.

4. J. Steven Watson, The Reign of George III 1760-1815 in The Oxford History of England, ed. George Clark (Oxford, 1960), p. 534. See esp. fn 2 p. 534.

5. Ibid., p. 535.

6. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, I, ed. Ernest Hartley Coleridge (Boston, 1896), pp. 351-352. This reference hereafter cited as Letters. See also J. B. Beer, Coleridge the Visionary (London, 1959), pp. 13-14 and p. 27.

7. J. H. Muirhead, "Past and Present in Contemporary Philosophy," in Contemporary British Philosophy, ed. J. H. Muirhead (New York, 1924), p. 311.

8. Ibid., pp. 309-311.

9. Letters, These letters are the first five in Volume I of this two volume series. They may also be found in the "Biographical Supplement" included in Volume III of The Complete Works.

10. Letters, I, p. 7.

11. Ibid., p. 12.

12. Works, III, p. 607.

13. James Dykes Campbell, Samuel Taylor Coleridge (London, 1894), p. 24.

14. Alois Brandl, Samuel Taylor Coleridge and the English Romantic School (London, 1887), p. 50

15. Ibid., p. 53.

16. Works, III, pp. 150-152.

17. Letters, I, p. 404. My underlinings indicate italics in the text of Coleridge.
18. Campbell, p. 14.
19. Ibid., p. 41. Campbell has the best record of this affair and its effect on Coleridge, pp. 37-41. See also, a letter to Robert Southey dated October 21, 1794, where Coleridge clearly reveals his love for Mary Evans, in Letters, I, pp. 87-89. See also Marshall Suther, The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (New York, 1960), pp. 25-26. Suther is here dealing with "Love and the Poetic Experience." While some of his conclusions are, to my mind, questionable, he does shed some considerable light on the part of love in the life and poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.
20. Encyclopaedia Britannica, III, ed. Harry S. Ashmore (Chicago, 1962), p. 9.
21. Marshall Suther, The Dark Night of Samuel Taylor Coleridge (New York, 1960), p. 34. See esp. fn. 21 on p. 34.
22. George Whalley, Coleridge and Sara Hutchinson and the Asra Poems (London, 1955), p. 98.
23. Letters, I, pp. 389-390. My underlinings indicate italics in the text of Coleridge.
24. Whalley, p. xii and p. 101.
25. Ibid., p. 98.
26. Encyclopaedia Britannica, III, p. 9.
27. Works, III, p. 256.
28. Suther, p. 4. My underlinings indicate italics in Suther's text.
29. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
30. Ibid., p. 10. See also fn. 26 on p. 10.

1. Works, IV, Literary Remains. pp. 19-20.
2. Works, III, pp. 364-375. I refer here to chapter XIV of the Biographia Literaria.
3. Ibid., pp. 373-375.
4. Works, VI, p. 324.
5. I. A. Richards, Coleridge on Imagination (Bloomington, 1960), p. 75.
6. Works, III, pp. 363-364. The section that I have placed in brackets was crossed out in one of Coleridge's manuscripts of the Biographia Literaria. See esp. the fn. on p. 363 in Volume III of the Works. The underlinings indicate italics in the text of Coleridge.
7. Richards, pp. 58-59. Richards is the leading authority on Coleridge and the Imagination.
8. Ibid., p. 59. Richards has used here the unfortunate word "against" to describe the difference between Fancy and Imagination. Later in the book, he warns against viewing these two as opposites.
9. Works, VI, pp. 517-518. The underlinings are my own and are used to emphasize what appears to me to be central in the passage.
10. Richards, p. 2.
11. Ibid., p. 19.
12. Letters, I, p. 378. For a history of the poem and its development see fn. 1 on pp. 378-379.
13. Works, VII, pp. 190-194.
14. cf. John Livingston Lowes, The Road to Xanadu (Boston, 1927), pp. 389-397.
15. Works, III, pp. 364-365.
16. Lowes, p. 34. My underlinings indicate italics in Lowes' text.



17. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," in A. J. M. Smith, Seven Centuries of Verse (New York, 1957), p. 332. All references to this poem are from this book and will hereafter be cited as A. M.

18. Lowes, pp. 35-38. I have made no attempt to reproduce Lowes' detailed account of his investigations to prove that Coleridge had read Priestley's work. It seems to me that his evidence is sound and his conclusions justified.

19. Ibid., p. 35.

20. Ibid., p. 37. See also appropriate fns. 12, 13 and 14 on pp. 430-431. My underlinings indicate italics in Lowes' text.

21. Ibid., p. 49. It is obvious that I have left out much information that preceded this quotation. My intention is to show the background material Coleridge drew on when he wrote this poem. The interested reader can find the full details in chapter III of Lowes' work, pp. 35-59.

22. Ibid., p. 50. Lowes has put the word "alone" in italics.

23. Works, III, p. 363.

24. Norman Guthrie, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner," Sewanee Review, VI, 1898, p. 200.

25. Robert Penn Warren, "A Poem of Pure Imagination: An Experiment in Reading," in Samuel Taylor Coleridge, The Rime of the Ancient Mariner (New York, 1946), p. 65. Warren points out that some critics feel the poem has no contact with reality. Warren does not agree with this and neither do I. The poem is an attempt to deal with the fact that man lives in a fallen and sinful condition. If one takes this fact seriously, then the poem indeed deals with reality for it deals with Man.

26. Ibid., p. 76.

27. Ibid., p. 74.

28. Works, I, pp. 437-438.

29. Works, IV, p. 265.

30. Warren, p. 82.
31. Works, VI, p. 303. This is a reference in the Table Talk for May 1, 1830. cf. Aids to Reflection, Works, I, pp. 268-290.
32. "A. M.," p. 326.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid. See also Warren, p. 83, who says that "Pious" means "faithful."
35. Warren, p. 83.
36. "A. M.," p. 327.
37. Warren, p. 85.
38. "A. M.," p. 328.
39. Ibid., p. 331.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., p. 332
43. Joseph Fletcher, William Temple Twentieth-Century Christian (New York, 1963), pp. 29-32.
44. "A. M.," pp. 341-342.
45. Ibid., p. 342. cf. Works, V, p. 21. In this section of Literary Remains, Coleridge has this to say about prayer, "A man may pray night and day, and yet deceive himself; but no man can be assured of his sincerity, who does not pray. Prayer is faith passing into act; a union of the will and the intellect realizing in an intellectual act. It is the whole man that prays."
46. Warren, p. 104.
47. See above p. 22.
48. Warren, pp. 101-102.

1. See above, p. 6.
2. James D. Boulger, Coleridge as Religious Thinker (New Haven, 1961), p. 65.
3. Ibid., p. 87.
4. Works, I, pp. 241-242.
5. Works, I, pp. 210-211.
6. Works, I, p. 461.
7. Works, I, pp. 321-322.
8. Works, I, pp. 456-457.
9. Boulger, pp. 206-207.
10. Works, I, p. 272. This quote is found in a long fn. on p. 272.
11. Boulger, pp. 207-208.
12. Charles Richard Sanders, Coleridge and the Broad Church Movement (Durham, 1942), p. 3.
13. Ibid., p. 24. Sanders offers a helpful summary of Coleridge's thoughts on truth. "The truth which was the ultimate object of Coleridge's search was in its essence spiritual -- the substance beneath the forms which could be grasped by the senses, the permanent and living reality which was the source of all power, the invisible laws governing man and the universe. He found its origin and continued existence, therefore, in God, whom he identified with the highest truth.... Truth, since it rested in God, took on the qualities essential to the Deity. It was invisible, not bounded by time and space, fixed and permanent. It was infinite in both breadth and depth. Although it was limitless and could never be completely explored by man, at its greatest depth it was still accessible to the lowest peasant. Since it was spiritual, it was not to be discerned through the senses, but only through what was spiritual in man. But it existed whether man discerned it or not. It was not made by man's mind, but was revealed to man by God, who was of necessity the actuating force behind all truth.

Man's glory lay in his power to apprehend the revealed truth and to render himself a willing subject to the revelation. To apprehend truth he did not have to comprehend it. The mystery of truth delighted the soul of man!"

Notes. Conclusion.

1. Nikos Kazantzakis, Report to Greco (New York, 1965), p. 22.
2. Works, V, p. 109.
3. Letters, II, p. 771.

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